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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6829
INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
WHITE HOUSE NSC

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 004246

NEA FOR BURNS/SATTERFIELD
NSC FOR ABRAMS/DANIN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/22/2013
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: ISLAMIC RADICALS ATTACK EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER
AT AL-AQSA

CLASSIFIED BY: CONSUL GENERAL DAVID D. PEARCE PER 1.5(D).

¶1. (U) EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AHMAD MAHER CAME UNDER ATTACK BY ISLAMIC ACTIVISTS WHILE VISITING AND PRAYING AT THE HARAM ASH-SHARIF ON THE EVENING OF DECEMBER 22. A VIDEO SHOWS MAHER BEING MOBBED BY ANGRY WORSHIPPERS AND APPARENTLY CHOKED BRIEFLY BY A CLOTH AROUND HIS NECK. WORSHIPPERS REPORTEDLY THREW SHOES AT HIM, AN ARAB SIGN OF DISRESPECT, AS HIS ENTOURAGE RUSHED HIM OUT OF THE MOSQUE. HE IS REPORTED TO BE IN GOOD CONDITION AFTER SUFFERING SHORTNESS OF BREATH. SALAH ZUHEIKEH, PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY (PA) WAQF DEPUTY MINISTER, TOLD POLOFF THAT THE ISLAMIC HIZB AT-TAHRIR (LIBERATION PARTY) WAS BEHIND THE ASSAULT. THE PARTY OBJECTED TO MAHER'S PRESENCE BECAUSE OF THE ALLEGEDLY "UN-ISLAMIC" NATURE OF THE EGYPTIAN REGIME AND THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO NEGOTIATE PEACE WITH ISRAEL. PA PRIME MINISTER ABU ALA'A AND NEGOTIATIONS AFFAIRS MINISTER SA'EB EREKAT CONDEMNED THE ATTACK, AND THE WAQF COUNCIL IS PREPARING A SIMILAR CONDEMNATION.

¶2. (C) ZUKEIKEH TOLD POLOFF THAT THIS ATTACK WAS NOT THE FIRST TIME THAT HIZB AT-TAHRIR FANATICS HAVE CAUSED A DISTURBANCE ON THE HARAM ASH-SHARIF. WHEN JORDAN FINANCED THE RENOVATION OF THE DOME OF THE ROCK TEN YEARS AGO, WAQF WORKERS ATTEMPTING TO PUT UP A SIGN IN HONOR OF KING HUSSEIN CAME UNDER ATTACK FROM HIZB AT-TAHRIR MEMBERS. AS IN THIS INCIDENT, THE VICTIMS OF THE ATTACK WERE ONLY LIGHTLY INJURED.

¶3. (U) COMMENT: HIZB AT-TAHRIR ESPOUSES A RADICAL PHILOSOPHY WHILE PROMOTING SURPRISINGLY MODERATE MEANS. THE PARTY CALLS FOR THE RETURN OF THE MUSLIM CALIPHATE, THE ABOLITION OF ALL CURRENT "INFIDEL" ARAB REGIMES, AND THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL. NEVERTHELESS, THE PARTY REJECTS THE USE OF VIOLENCE IN THE PURSUIT OF THESE GOALS. THE PARTY CLAIMS THAT THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD DID NOT RESORT TO JIHAD AND VIOLENCE IN THE EARLY DAYS OF ISLAM UNTIL HE HAD FORMED THE NUCLEUS OF AN ISLAMIC NATION. ONLY THEN DID HE BEGIN THE JIHAD AND CONQUESTS THAT SPREAD ISLAM ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST. IN KEEPING WITH THAT TRADITION, THE PARTY ESCHEWS VIOLENCE UNTIL THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PROPER ISLAMIC STATE. ZUHEIKEH TOLD POLOFF THAT, IN RECENT YEARS, RIVAL FACTIONS OF THE PARTY HAVE EMERGED PUSHING A HARDER LINE THAT CALLS FOR A MORE FORCEFUL APPROACH TO SPREADING THE PARTY'S MESSAGE. WHILE THESE MEMBERS STOP SHORT OF TERRORISM, THEY DO BELIEVE IN USING FORCE OCCASIONALLY LIKE THE GROUP'S FOLLOWERS DISPLAYED ON THE HARAM ASH-SHARIF TODAY.

PEARCE